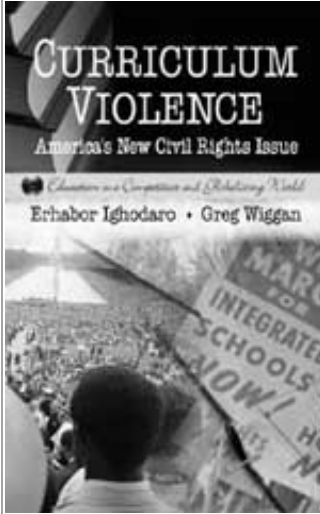


Curriculum Violence: America's New Civil Rights Issue

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Curriculum Violence: America's New Civil Rights Issue		
Author:	Erhabor Ighodaro & Greg Wiggan (2011)	
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Curriculum Violence: America's New Civil Rights Issue provides a historical and contemporary analysis on curriculum development in the United States. Researchers and authors Erhabor Ighodaro and Greg Wiggan use their personal experiences—from Nigeria and Jamaica, respectively—to highlight problems and solution to the American educational system.

The coined term, “curriculum violence,” refers to the deliberate manipulation of academic programming in a manner that ignores or compromises the intellectual and psychological well-being of learners” (Ighodaro & Wiggan, 2011, p. 2). Through a combination of extensive research and personal experiences, the authors unveil systematic methods of curriculum manipulation and explore the damages this has done to students. Eliminating curriculum violence for African American youth is manifested through exposure, relevant information, and positive reinforcement (p. 72). The book highlights in a series of five distinct steps, the ways in which curriculum violence is manifested and likewise mediated, including: formation, deformation, conformation, reformation, and transformation. The book concludes with reflections and

recommendations for practitioners to use, including tangible techniques to eliminate curriculum violence.

The authors move through the various stages of curriculum violence and provide strategies aimed at developing a non-violent curriculum. First, formation is the “theoretical framework for mind development”—including cognitive aspects, cultural norms, and values (p. 69). The authors systematically unveil how schools decide what information is valuable for students to learn. Here, Ighodaro and Wiggan illustrate the problems of cultural falsification. Through a case study of the Miami Dade County Public School district, the state’s standardized tests, known as the FCAT, they argue that the test is a modernized manifestation of cultural domination (p. 79). Second, deformation is described as “a process of negative indoctrination,” whereby an individual loses their psychological independence (p. 81). The authors explain how this phenomenon has compounded over decades of historical pains that have negatively impacted African Americans social-psychologically, and with regards to becoming dependent on the dominant group. Sadly, this has also manifested itself throughout over a century of incorrect research, which continues to pervasively oppress African Americans. Third, conformation “embodies the condition of paralysis in which individuals lose control of initiative, discretion, and free will” (p. 101). Here, the authors examine how the violence is manifested in psycho-intellectual paralysis through the class-ceiling, etc. The fourth stage, reformation, “denotes a process of affirming and enriching the intellectual... and social well-being of learners” (p. 117). Here the African importance of community is communicated through the reclaiming of values in school, family, and support. Finally, the fifth stage is transformation, which “refers to a shift in the individual’s intellectual and psychological acuity” (p. 133). In this last and final stage, the authors examine two specific examples of deliberate and natural transformation, which proves to be successful and beneficial.

The above description of curriculum violence shows the strategic progression through the omission of pertinent cultural values and curriculum truths, as well as the falsification of history to continuously omit and oppress minority groups. Similarly, in the book *Know Thy Self*, Na’im Akbar explains the consequences of cultural omissions in schools. Both in *Curriculum Violence* and *Know Thy Self*, the authors advocate for the dissemination of correct, factual knowledge as opposed to hegemonic myths. In *Curriculum Violence*, Ighodaro and Wiggan argue for systematic curriculum changes, while Na’im Akbar argues for a personal, self-reflective change. Both texts acknowledge that a proper education can help bring healing to marginalized groups.

Curriculum Violence and *Know Thy Self* use Africa as a point of praxis. As Ighodaro and Wiggan reveal through a case study of Miami, Florida, Africa’s contributions have generally been removed from the United States education. In the case of Florida, even with feeble attempts to incorporate a more diverse curriculum, most educators ignore the curriculum and continue teaching to the traditional Eurocentric model due to the pressures of high-stakes state assessments. This powerful case study provides a modern example of the pervasiveness of curriculum violence. Practical, historical, and psychoanalytic views are explored throughout *Curriculum Violence* regarding why the African experience has been systematically eradicated from history. In the American

tradition, discourse surrounding Africa has been removed from most public school curricula. The utilization of multiple paradigms to explore this phenomenon is a crystallized, salient strength of the author's text. Without question, the pervasive, ideological domination of the Eurocentric model has compounded throughout years of multi-tier experiences and oppression.

Although *Curriculum Violence* reveals several systematic flaws in public education for minority youth, the premise of the authors' research is clearly around restoration and increasing student achievement. Throughout the text, there are proverbial stories and illustrations, which add narrative and timeless principles of cultural empowerment. This is a distinctive African tradition founded in the start of humanity, which is also seen in Akbar's *Know Thy Self*. The framework of Ighodaro and Wiggan's work also supports the claims of Afrocentricity through the research. This is a direct strength of the authors' argument about the significance and difference between African philosophies of education and the Westernized models used today. As Akbar mentioned, African centered pedagogy and curriculum design is centered on love and community. Throughout *Curriculum Violence*, the authors use these same Afrocentric principles in their research, by uplifting and providing a framework of transformation. In essence, the authors not only argue for the necessity of this restoration, but their work serves as a restorative piece through the use of positive principles and illustrations. This re-centers Africa back to its original place in history, saturated with these same proverbial wisdoms and knowledge used in the text.

Another strength and unique aspect of this book is its historical relation to many contemporary problems. Perhaps one of the most poignant themes throughout the book is the importance of having a historical context to analyze educational issue. When analyzing achievement data and the widely known "achievement gap"—it is important to notate the compounding effects of curriculum misinformation, inadequate educational opportunities, and unequal access to education (Ighodaro & Wiggan, 2011; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003). This "achievement gap" describes the differences in achievement between Black and White students in the United States. According to Asa Hilliard in *Young, Gifted, and Black*, historical events have perpetuated injustice and the unequal treatment of groups (2003). The institutionalized, ideological domination is so pervasive in the case study in Florida, that it intensifies the authors' argument about relevance of their research today. The authors explain how critical this ignored aspect of education is, especially in urban school districts.

Although this volume is framed in a US context, teachers of English as a foreign language worldwide would benefit from this book for the additional cultural perspectives and historical contexts surrounding formalized schooling. In and outside the USA, it is critical for educators to examine what is being taught and to whom information is transmitted and at what cost to individuals and communities.

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